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Foreign
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Chemical Warfare in Kampuchea

Intelligence Memorandum

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Chemical Warfare in Kampuchea

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Summary

The military forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) almost certainly are using nonlethal screening smokes, riot-control agents, and possibly incapacitating chemicals against the guerrilla forces of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and the non-Communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front, especially along the Thai-Kampuchea border.

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Some riot-control agents, along with dissemination equipment and munitions, possibly have been supplied by the Soviets or come from captured US supplies. Any incapacitants would have been supplied by a third party, probably the Soviets.

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The Vietnamese are capable of engaging in offensive, lethal, chemical operations with aid and supplies from the Soviets, such as occurred in Laos.

there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the Vietnamese-PRK forces are using lethal chemicals.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Scientific and Weapons Research. It was coordinated with the Offices of Strategic Research and Political Analysis, and the Directorate of Operations. It was reviewed by the National Intelligence Officers for General Purpose Forces and for Near East-South Asia, and the Arms Control Intelligence Staff. Information available as of 15 July 1980 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to the Chief, Life Sciences Branch, OSWR, on

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Chemical Attacks

Since October 1978, radiobroadcasts, press releases, and official protests to the United Nations by Democratic Kampuchea have accused the Vietnamese and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) of using Soviet-made, lethal chemical agents and weapons against dissident DK guerrilla forces and civilians. According to the radiobroadcasts and press releases, the Vietnamese-PRK forces made 80 chemical assaults, lethal and nonlethal, against DK guerrillas between October 1978 and May 1980. As of 2 July, DK leaders have continued to make frequent allegations that the Vietnamese are using lethal chemicals against the guerrillas.

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Official DK radiobroadcasts and press releases have stated that the PAVN-PRK chemical attacks produce symptoms ranging from mild, temporary incapacitation to severe incapacitation and death. Initially, in October 1978, the DK descriptions indicated that a riot-control chemical was used. The DK did not publicize symptomatic effects ascribed to lethal agents until

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after the plight of the Hmong refugees had been published in the Thai press and other news media. The DK-reported symptoms, which resembled those reported by the Hmong refugees who were exposed to lethal and nonlethal chemicals in Laos, suggest that a riot-control agent or an unidentified lethal agent or a combination of toxic chemicals was used. [REDACTED]

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The DK also has reported that the Vietnamese are spreading a ground contaminant that produces severe swelling of the feet, tissue destruction, pus formation, and gangrene, leading to death in one to three days. Because Pol Pot forces do not wear shoes or sandals, a persistent vesicant or mixture of vesicants similar to the arsine and mustard class of compounds used in this way would be effective. [REDACTED]

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According to DK accounts, hundreds of people have been killed and incapacitated from the chemical agents. Almost 50 percent of the reported victims have been the elderly, pregnant women, and children. These groups, especially under the conditions of malnutrition and disease prevalent in the parts of Kampuchea under DK control, are likely to be the most susceptible to the effects of lethal or nonlethal chemicals. In some instances, chemicals normally considered to be nonlethal may have a lethal effect on people in weakened physical condition. [REDACTED]

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Despite repeated official DK charges that the Vietnamese and PRK forces are using lethal chemicals in Kampuchea, there is no evidence to support these claims. The Vietnamese and PRK forces, however, almost certainly are making at least limited use of riot-control chemicals and possibly incapacitating agents against both Communist and non-Communist guerilla forces in Kampuchea. The chemicals used probably include screening smokes, riot-control agents such as CS, [REDACTED]

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Results of Chemical Analysis

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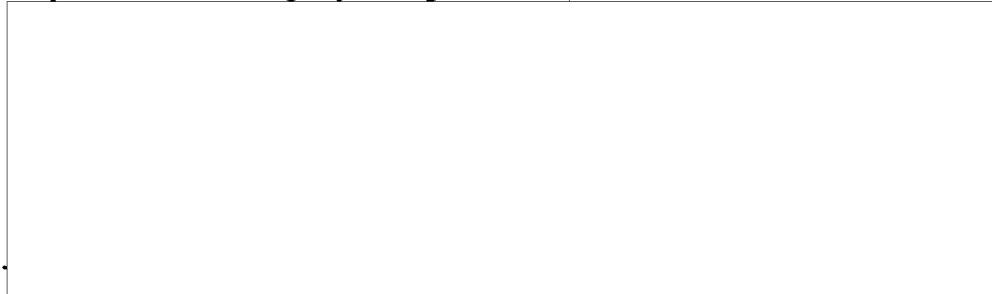
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DK officials apparently are attempting to provide the ICRC and international newsmen with substantive evidence that joint PAVN-PRK forces are using CW against them. DK troops have delivered to the ICRC blood specimens from alleged poison-gas victims. [REDACTED]

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A recent report stated that Thai soldiers had discovered several canisters, apparently containing nonlethal military chemicals, near the Thai-Kampuchean border. Smoke billowing from one of the canisters reportedly "numbed" a Thai soldier who, after a very brief hospitalization, recovered. DK troops also gave the Thais a gas grenade found in an area that had been attacked by the PAVN. The reported description of and markings on this grenade fit those of US CS ABC M-25A2 grenades, which probably were among US supplies captured by the Vietnamese. [REDACTED]

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Soviet Involvement

There is no evidence that directly links the Soviets with chemical operations in Kampuchea. As a logical extension of the Laotian situation in which the Soviets provided advice, chemicals, and chemical munitions to Vietnamese and Laotian forces, however, it is probable that the Soviets would assist the Vietnamese in their Kampuchean aggression, if requested. The Vietnamese have had a military chemical branch for 22 years and probably have stores of chemical agents and munitions from the USSR. Neither Vietnam nor the PRK is believed to have the capability to conduct offensive, lethal, chemical operations without third-country assistance. [REDACTED]

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